

“It’s What We Do!”

131st Fighter Wing
Missouri Air National Guard

No. 1
Jan/Feb/Mar 2004

131st Fighter Wing declares ‘Fights On!’

By 2nd Lt. Bridget Zorn and
Staff Sgt. Cathy Lirette
131 Fighter Wing Public Affairs

The 131st Fighter Wing is preparing itself for the Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI). With the ORI quickly approaching, Wing members are working to ensure that all the “I’s” are dotted and the “T’s” are crossed before the Air Combat Command Inspector General (IG) team walks in the door.

“We are ready,” declared Col. Robert L. Leeker, 131st FW Vice Commander. “We have spent the last year getting ready for this inspection and are ready to show everyone just how ‘Outstanding’ we really are.”

The Wing set the bar during the last Operation Readiness Exercise (ORE) Jan. 17-25, when it generated 14 aircraft, processed, deployed and redeployed 755 people, 28 flatbed trucks and two hundred short tons of equipment. Even more impressive was that this was done during inclement weather conditions.

While deployed, members survived countless attacks from aircraft, missiles and special operations forces. They also experienced building fires, evacuations, power outages and more, while fighting in MOPP conditions. Additionally, 88 of the 90 scheduled sorties were flown. The bad guy was successfully brought to his knees, ending the exercise.

Although the process as a whole revealed a few “bumps in the road,” Col. Leeker is confident that the minor problems will be corrected in time for the ORI.

“This is a learning process,” he said. “Each time we have an ORE, it reveals to us where our strengths and weaknesses are. Once we find this out, we focus and capitalize on the strong points and overcome our weak points. It is this process that is going to help us achieve our goal during the ORI.”

According to Col. Michael G. Brandt, 131st FW Commander, this goal is no longer just to be recognized as an “Outstanding” unit, but as the “Best Seen To Date”.

“I know we are ‘Outstanding’. End of discussion,” he said. “I will not set a goal less than that because you get what you expect and I expect to be ‘Outstanding’. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that this achievable, but it requires every ounce of effort.”

“We have the people, the equipment, resources, plans and capability to get an ‘Outstanding’,” he continued. “This goal is very obtainable. We have the best people and they have shown attention to detail, willingness to cooperate and an amazing positive attitude. It is that winning, confident attitude, built through dedicated training, that will serve us well during the inspection.”

The criteria for an “Outstanding” is clearly



Senior Master Sgt. Al Schulte

Wing aircraft and personnel stand ready to obtain an “Outstanding” during the Operational Readiness Inspection.

defined. There are four major areas graded in the Operational Readiness Inspection: Initial response, Employment, Mission Support and ATSO. One of these areas must receive an “Outstanding”, two need to be “Excellent” and only one can be “Satisfactory”.

According to Col. Brandt, “Employment must be ‘Outstanding’. That’s what we do - generate jets and kill migs (Air War). The Initial Response is how we get outta Dodge. This is a massive machine. In addition to moving everybody and everything, we have to generate the jets. This Phase I sets the tone for the inspection. This is our opportunity to send a clear signal to the team that we are ready. We need to be at our best, the Fight’s On!”

An inside
look!

Yearly award
winners
Page 4

A journey through
the January ORE
Pages 5 & 6

Family members
at war!
Page 6

Airman Studies
in Russia
Page 9



Col. Michael G. Brandt

131st Fighter Wing Commander

Col. Robert L. Leeker

131st Fighter Wing Vice Commander



Tenant Units

Col. Lawrence Smith Jr.

231st Civil Engineering Flight Commander

Lt. Col. Robert L. Lienemann

239th CBCS Commander

“It’s What We Do!”

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Base is ready to be “Outstanding!”

By **Col. Michael G. Brandt**
131st Fighter Wing Commander

I have been asked by many people -- usually off to the side and seeking an honest answer -- “Do you really think we can get an Outstanding?” I guess the question comes from someone who feels they are outstanding but are not sure about the rest of the base.

It is the commanders’ responsibility to make that crystal clear. It is also the commanders’ responsibility to make sure we have eliminated every obstacle so the war fighters can fight the war. It is your responsibility to hit the ground running, do your job and root on the team. While you may not be personally involved in certain areas your fellow members are cranking out the jets, processing cargo and people and getting us on our way.

During the war we will generate and load jets and the pilots will fly sorties day and night. We will also put out fires, care for our people, fix runways, run recce routes and so on. It is truly a fantastic machine.

It’s time to make sure that everyone knows that the threat isn’t on this base. We may all be working to make sure our own areas are outstanding, but when the Inspector General evaluates us, it is as a Wing that we are graded. Our success is based on our ability to fight together. If the Wing grade is satisfactory we are all satisfactory. No single organization makes this Wing work. It either works together or it doesn’t work at all. When you show up for the WAR, you

will be prepared. You will have written out all of your procedures and you will have practiced them until they are second nature. You will know where to be, when to be there and what is expected of you. If you see something wrong, fix it. Make every effort to be recognized for what we do.

What we do is Air Superiority— Anywhere, Anytime. This isn’t just a slogan, it is a statement of fact. It is what we do. We need to stay focused on the critical elements of our profession and make sure we are doing the right things the right way. There are many tasks that are scheduled and the tempo is high. Protecting our people and our resources is the number one priority.

It is important to understand the BIG PICTURE: people helping other people, pitching in, and paying attention to detail. If we aren’t there, let’s get there. When a phone rings or when someone says they need help, do what you can to fix the problem.

In my 24-plus years, the 131st FW has never failed to get it together, take the fight to the enemy, win, and do it all with style.

We serve our country, we work hard and we care. Let’s show the rest of the world--and I do mean world because we are certainly being watched--that we mean business. I want our friends to be in awe and I want our enemies to (insert expletive here) when we’re on the ramp in their part of the world. “It’s what we do!”

Wing’s ORI is worth waiting for

By **Lt. Col. Michael T. Butler**
131st Fighter Wing Chaplain

The Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI) is something we are all very familiar with and it is an event that we feel we have been preparing for forever. Waiting for the upcoming inspection to happen has been agonizing. Yet waiting is not always a bad thing.

Most of our faiths have an aspect of waiting. In the Christian message, it is often characterized by phrases like “eagerly awaiting,” “joyful expectation,” and “hopeful anticipation.” But these phrases hardly give the impression of agony.

When is waiting “agony” and when is it

“eager, joyful and hopeful?”

What is the difference? The difference is in how you wait. Waiting for chow can be agony, but reading the menu and deciding what to eat can be eager. Waiting for a plane in the airport can be agonizing, but reading a favorite book while waiting can be joyful. Waiting your turn to run the mile can be agony, but stretching and warming up while you wait can be hopeful.

Let the upcoming inspection be an opportunity for faith to influence how you do business. Challenge yourself to make this time of waiting and preparation for the ORI eager, joyful and hopeful.

ORI safety awareness equals mission readiness

By Master Sgt. Tim Colvin
131st Fighter Wing Safety Office

The January Operational Readiness Exercise (ORE) is over. Now it's time to harness all the knowledge and experience gained and put it to work so that the Wing can shine during the Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI).

Good safety awareness was on display in January.

However, "good" will not cut it in April. In order for us to meet the goal head on, the Wing will have to display "Best Seen to Date" safety awareness and display flawless adherence to the safety requirements and regulations.

The sense of urgency displayed during the Rapid Runway Repair exercise was

an awesome sight. Repairing a damaged runway in time to allow our aircraft to land is crucial to mission success. Doing it in record time will go a long way towards an "Outstanding," but a single safety violation could tarnish that record time and make an "Outstanding" rating fall to satisfactory or marginal.

Performing tasks safely and

in record time is sure to water the inspectors' eyes and result in a "Best Seen to Date."

Safety is everyone's responsibility. We must adhere to safety requirements and ensure personnel around us do the same.

Our ORI goals cannot be accomplished without safety integrated into everything we do.

Briefs

FAMILYCAREPLAN

All military personnel are responsible for ensuring their family members are taken care of should they have to deploy or be assigned to a remote area. Military couples with family members and single member sponsors are required to document their family care plan on Air Force Form 357.

Once completed, these forms are maintained in the First Sergeant's office. Members that already have an AF 357 on file will be contacted to verify that their plan is up to date.

NEWNAMETAGS

As of Jan. 1 it is mandatory to wear the new Air Force name tag on the dress blue coat and blue pull over sweater. The old nametag is still required on the dress shirt. The new nametags are in supply. Supply hours are Tuesday - Friday from noon to 4 p.m. and from 7:30 am to 3 p.m. on UTA Saturdays

GOODNEWSFORUS

Home Depot stores, through the volunteer program "Project Home Front," are providing up to \$1,000 for home repairs to families whose military sponsors are deployed. There is an application

process at website: www.projecthomefront.org.

TRICARESTANDARD ALLOWS CIVILIAN CARE

People covered by the TRICARE Standard military health care plan no longer need approval from their military treatment facility to seek inpatient care at civilian hospitals.

Before seeking care at a civilian facility, military health system officials urge beneficiaries to check with their nearby military treatment facility to compare services and ask questions.

For more information, see the Air Force Print News story at <http://www.af.mil/stories/story.asp?storyID=123006443> or go to www.tricare.osd.mil.

DODRESUMES ANTHRAXSHOTS

A federal judge ruled in January that the Department of Defense could again legally administer anthrax immunizations to service members.

The department's anthrax vaccine immunization program had been suspended since Dec. 23, after an injunction granted the previous day by the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia

caused DOD to suspend the program.

For more information, see the Air Force Print News story at <http://www.af.mil/stories/story.asp?storyID=123006337>.

2004 TAX INFO

There are multiple companies offering free preparation and filing to military and others. Also, it hasn't got much press, but for 2003, reservists who travel more

than 100 miles each way to drill can deduct mileage, lodging and meal expenses as an above the line deduction.

There is more information in IRS Publication 463 about what forms must be filled out and how to include this on the tax return. This is not in the instructions, nor is there a place on the 1040 to list this. It is a hand-written entry on line 33.



Courtesy Photo

Under investigation

A Missouri Air National Guard F-15 Eagle rests in the mud after it rolled off a runway Mar. 1. No one was hurt during the incident, which is currently under investigation.



Through generous support of 190 full time and traditional military members, the 131st Fighter Wing pledged \$38, 707.90, surpassing its goal of 38,000.

Awards and Decorations

Pilot of the Year



Lt. Col. Reed Drake
110 FS

Officer of the Year



Capt. George Mell
131 LRS

Senior NCO of the Year



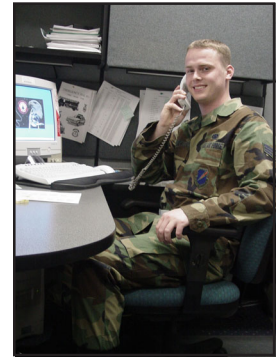
Senior Master Sgt. Greg Schumacher
131 MXS

NCO of the Year



Tech. Sgt. Michael Schwer
131 MXS

Airman of the Year



Senior Airman Robert Trautwein
131 CF



Tech. Sgt. John L. Temple
131 FW/Det 1 Cannon Range



(Ret.) Col. Donald Boatright
131 MSS

(Ret.) Col. Donald Boatright, 131 Mission Support Squadron, and Tech. Sgt. John L. Temple, 131 Fighter Wing/Det 1 were recently awarded the Bronze Star Medal.

The Bronze Star Medal is awarded to any person who, while serving in any capacity in or with the military of the United States after Dec. 6 1941, distinguished himself or herself by heroic or meritorious achievement or service, not involving participation in aerial flight, while engaged in



an action against an enemy of the United States; while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force; or while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the US is not a belligerent party. Awards may be made for acts of heroism, performed under circumstances described above, which are of lesser degree than required for the award of the Silver Star.

Promotions

Lt. Col.		Gieson, Tyson P.	131 AMXS
Howard, Norman F.	231 CEF	Morton, Terrance D.	139 CES
1st Lt.		Willison, Charles	131 AMXS
Cowin, Jason W.	231 CEF	Staff Sgt.	
Kroeller, Brian J.	131 OSF	DeVorss, Christopher	131 FW
Chief Master Sgt		Doerr, Jennifer L.	131 AMXS
Cook, Rusty L.	139 CF	Hanner, Oren P.	239 CBCS
Master Sgt.		Senior Airman	
Allies, Terrill	110 WF	Bylo, Ronald J.	131 AMXS
Fish, Fredric S.	131 CES	Dolan, Donna	131 AFB
Flynn, Brian J.	239 CBCS	McAllister, William C.	131 CF
Fox, Linda L.	131 MXG	Schultz, Nicholas A.	131 OSF
Livingston, Jessica J.	131 MSF	Tirado, Edward Jr.	131 AMXS
Perkins, Kevin E.	239 CBCS	Youngstrom, Sarah J.	571 AFB
Rhodes, Patricia L.	131 LRS	Airman 1st Class	
Sample, Lloyd G.	239 CBCS	Hester, Charles A.	131 CF
Ulmer, Kurt D.	139 MSG	Marler, Randy D.	131 AMXS
Wendt, Paul W.	110 WF	McAllister, Kristin N.	131 MDS
Williams, Stephen	131 LRS	Suther, Ryan E.	239 CBCS
Tech. Sgt		Airman	
Bourn, John A.	157 AOG	Braden, Lindsay N.	571 AFB

Meritorious Service Medal

Col. Samuel S. Sivewright	231 CEF
(Ret.) Col. Donald Boatright	131 MSG
Lt. Col. Carl J. Wouden	231 CEF
CMSgt. Thomas L. Renz	131 FW
SMSgt. George T. Sonnenberg	131 MOF
MSgt. Michelle A. Coleman	131 MOF
MSgt. Jerry D. Harvey	131 MG

Air Force Achievement Medal

2nd Lt. John R. Arata	571 AFB
Maj. Frank A. Rodman	131 FW
SMSgt. Jerry L. Blankenship	131 FW
MSgt. Ronald G. Choster	131 FW
MSgt. Timothy D. Colvin	131 FW
TSgt. Kevin L. Cashion	131 FW
SSgt. Shawn M. Tamborski	131 FW

Air Force Comendation Medal

2nd Lt. Kay M. McRoberts	131 FW
MSgt Brenda J. Tamashiro	131 FW
TSgt. Karen J. Sterling	131 FW

A journey through the January ORE



Master Sgt. Richard Slominsky, Passenger Briefer, briefs deploying members as they go through the processing line.



Deploying members bear the freezing temperatures as they wait to get their baggage weighed.



Master Sgt. Stephanie (Stevie) Riley, Services Manager, processes deployed members in and out of billeting.



Tech. Sgt. Deb Banks, Personnel Processing Area briefer, informs airman of the daily conditions.



Firefighters save an unconscious pilot during an egress exercise. It was one of four graded exercises they participated in.



Senior Airman J. Hembree, a crew chief with the 131 Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, checks an F-15 landing gear after a mission.



Senior Airman Kimberly Young gives service with a smile as she dishes out meals during field feeding in the cantonment area



An Exercise Evaluation Team member watched CE troops get down and dirty when their caravan came under fire from enemy forces.



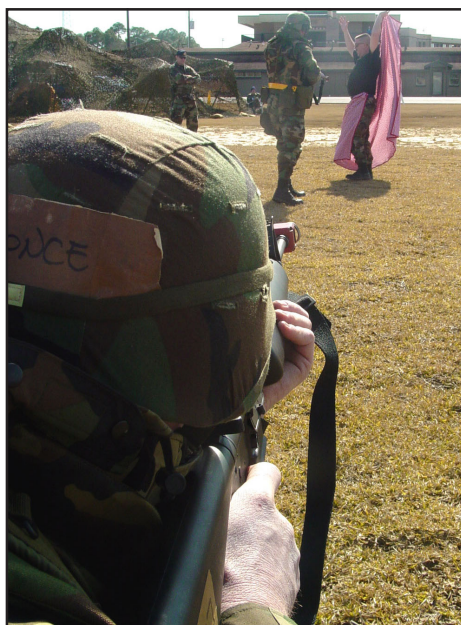
Tech. Sgt. Brad Burch, 131st Security Forces Squadron, takes aim at a suspected target during one of the many exercises.



Military members throughout the base rush to get into their MOPP gear as the load signs warn that an attack is imminent.

Photos taken by:

Senior Master Sgt. Al Schulte
Master Sgt. Richard Fonner
Staff Sgt. Cathy Lirette



Civil Engineering troops encounter a possible threat while performing a sweep of the Base Cantonment Site. The person later turned out to be a friendly host national.



Staff Sgt. Brad Doyle, Vehicle Transportation, picks up passengers waiting at the bus stop.



Two airman assist each other in removing their chemical boots as they go through the Contaminated Collection Area.



After setting up a road sign, Senior Airman Rain Sims, a supply specialist, updates the daily conditions of the base.



Maj. Dennis Arroyo, Triage Officer, makes a medical assessment to determine the seriousness of the victim's injuries.



Two finance members demonstrated buddy care by assisting each other in drinking water out of their canteens while in MOPP 4 conditions.

PERSCO ensures manpower accountability

By Staff Sgt. Cathy Lirette
131st Fighter Wing Public Affairs

One the most important aspects of any mission is having the manpower to perform it. Without the correct number of people to execute them most missions would fall short.

So as one can imagine it is of the utmost importance to know exactly how many people are available to carry out each mission and it is because of this necessity that Personnel Support for Contingency Operations (PERSCO) teams are established.

PERSCO teams are made up of six individuals who are hand selected by the mission support flight commander and the PERSCO team chief. They are military members within the personnel career field who receive special training to track force accountability and strength during deployment and wartime operations.

"Our job is to know where everyone is on base," explained said Master Sgt. Jessica Livingston, the Noncommissioned Officer in Charge of PERSCO. "We need to know if they are just arriving or if they are departing or if they are missing; we need to know exactly why they are missing. In addition, it is also our re-

sponsibility to know each individual's duty status and whether they are capable of performing their jobs."

The team does this by collecting Air Force Form 245s, otherwise known as Employment Locator Cards, and by reviewing Contingency Exercise and Deployment orders. Once this data is received, the PERSCO team enters all the information into a MANPER-B system, which allows them to generate reports for the commander.

"This information helps the deployed commander fight the war by letting him or her know the exact number of people he or she has to fight with," added Livingston. "This is indispensable information because lets imagine a pilot has been shot down, however, the commander needs a certain number of pilots to carry out a special mission. Unless he or she knows the status of that pilot, he or she may not be able to have that mission completed. So it is of the utmost importance that we give him the correct information."

During the war, the team gets their information through reports from the Survival Recovery Center, Casualty Collection Points and the Medical Squadron. Twenty four hours-a-day, seven

days-a-week, they spend their time gathering the required information.

"We are one of the first people to arrive and one of the last to leave," said Tech. Sgt. Karen Sterling, PERSCO team member. "This not a 7-to-4 kind of job; its one that has to be accomplished around the clock. Besides getting the data to the commander, we also have Air Force instructions which regulate the time limits we have to get the information out to higher headquarters or next of kin."

Sterling adds that most people have no idea what the PERSCO team does or the importance of it. She continues to explain that this is not all that these men and woman are required to do. In addition to tracking personnel accountability, they are also perform personnel functions such as writing promotions, processing awards and decorations, updating emergency data cards and other important tasks.

"Like many military personnel we have a dual role," concluded Livingston. "But no matter which role we are performing, we try to do it to our fullest capability and with a real sense of urgency too. We are just doing our part to help fulfill the mission and win the war."

Family members go to "war" with each other

By Staff Sgt. Cathy Lirette
131st Fighter Wing Public Affairs

War can be hell, and the fact most military members are separated from their family and friends can make the situation even worse. However, some individuals are lucky enough to be able to share their turmoil with family members.

Whether it is husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, fathers and sons, or any other family relation a handful of men and women from around the base are finding that having a loved one around during war time can have both its advantages and disadvantages.

Lt. Col. Kathleen Hancox, Officer in Charge of the 131st Fighter Wing Military Personnel Flight, is among those who deployed with a relative during the September and January OREs. She deployed with her brother, Master Sgt. Michael Nabholz of the 131st Maintenance Squadron, who works as a maintenance analyst. To her, having her brother in combat with her is an added bonus.

"The best thing about having him there with me is that he had to come through the Personnel Processing Area everyday, which gives me a chance to see him where as normally I do not," she said. "It also gave me the

comfort to know that he is here with me."

She adds that even though she thinks about him when things begin to happen, she has no extra worries as they both have been trained and know what to do if anything should really happen during a wartime situation.

On the other hand, Staff Sgt. Maggie McFatridge, of the 131st Fight Wing Logistics Readiness Squadron, would rather her husband not be deployed with her as he is right in harms way working as a weapons loader on the flight line. She explains that where she works in the Combat Supply Activity is inside a

building, however he is right in the middle of things out in the open.

"There is always the added extra worry because he is a direct part of the mission," she said. "My mind is usually split in two, half on my job and half wondering about him."

Maggie recognises that she has to do the best she can at her job since it directly affects her husband. She issues combat parts to maintenance.

"Although I wish one of us could stay home, a part of me is also glad that he is deployed

Families at "war"

See page 8

Families at “war”

From page 7

with me,” she continued. “He is like my security blanket and it’s reassuring to know that we are both there for each other if or when anything happens.”

Her husband, Staff Sgt. Chris McFatrige, 131st FW Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, agrees adding that her company makes it feel as though he is not so alone.

“Having your loved one with you helps improve morale and working conditions because you know you’re not going through this by yourself,” he said. “It’s nice knowing that there is always someone to lean on during rough times.”

Yet his wife is not the only one Chris has been able to count on as he also has been deployed with his father Senior Master Sgt. John McFatrige,

131st LRS Vehicle Maintenance.

“It was neat being deployed with him because we were both able to experience the same things,” Chris said. “Plus he was always there if I needed advice. He has been around for along time and has lots of experience.”

Unfortunately for Chris, his father is about to retire and he will no longer be able to be deployed with him. Yet Chris will still be able to enjoy the

companionship of his wife during these hard times.

Other military members who have deployed with family members include Master Sgt. Gary Todd and his wife Tech. Sgt. Patty Todd, Master Sgt. Tim Howard and his son Senior Airman Christopher Howard; Maj. Timothy Jones and his wife Maj. Nancy Jones, Tech Sgt. Marty Alterson and his wife Master Sgt. Bonnie Alterson.

Christmas Stars shine bright with Wing’s help

By Master Sgt. Jim Bader
131st Fighter Wing Hydraulic Shop

The Christmas Stars program to benefit the residents of the Missouri Baptist Children’s Home was another outstanding success this year.

Twenty-five “stars” were adopted by 131st Fighter Wing work centers, families and other individuals. Approximately 150 gifts were donated including clothing, household items and toys. In addition, several generous cash donations were collected.

“I would like to thank everyone for their support and participation in this important charity program,” said Master Sgt. Jim Bader, 131st Maintenance Squadron Hydraulic Shop supervisor and Christmas Stars program coordinator. “You have made a

difference in a young person’s life.”

Wing members who volunteered for the program were Master Sgt. James Bader, Staff Sgt. Kevin Byrne, Master Sgt. Vanessa Carty, Tech. Sgt. Linda Fox, Lt. Col. Kathleen Hancox, Master Sgt. Jessica Livingston, Master Sgt. Chris Montoya, Senior Master Sgt. Dan Peters and Master Sgt. Angie Varvel.

The Missouri Baptist Children’s Home serves Missouri’s abused, neglected and troubled children through emergency placement, residential care, crisis pregnancy / mothers with children services, foster / adoptive placement, counseling and transitional living program. This is a very local charity. The main campus is located at 11300 St. Charles Rock Road in Bridgeton, directly across from Home

Depot. The home also openly accepts serviceable clothing and household items.

If you would like more information log onto www.mbch.org or contact Carol Curtis at 314-739-6811, extension 231.



Courtesy photo

Wing members, their families and other individuals donated 150 gifts to the Christmas Stars program which benefited the Missouri Baptists Children’s Home.

Calendar of events

Women’s History Month	March
St. Patrick’s Day	Mar. 17
First Day of Spring	Mar. 20
April Fool’s Day	April 1
Daylight Saving	April 4
Palm Sunday	April 4
First Day of Passover	April 6
Good Friday	April 9
Easter	April 11
Prof. Secretaries Day	April 21
Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month	May
Military Spouse Day	May 9
Mother’s Day	May 9
Armed Forces Day	May 15
Memorial Day	May 31

Wing highlights recruiting, retention

By 2nd Lt. Bridget Zorn
131st Fighter Wing

Maj. General Steve McCamy, Commander of the Missouri Air National Guard, has challenged ANG units with the lofty goal of achieving 100% manning before the end of fiscal year 2004.

Although the recruiting staff at Lambert average 13 recruits per month, they need to do much more to meet Gen. McCamy’s challenge.

“Not only do we lose people to military retirements, but to non-retention as well,” said Master Sgt. Dewitt White,

131st Fighter Wing Recruiting Office Supervisor. “We rely heavily on unit referrals to keep our recruiting numbers up.”

The active duty’s force shaping initiative, which encourages active duty members to apply for the Palace Chase program, has opened opportunities for recruiting prior-service members.

Master Sgt. Angela Varvel, 131st Mission Support Group First Sergeant, just returned from Whiteman Air Force Base, where she spoke with potential recruits hoping to bring

qualified troops to the 131st FW.

Recruiters also make frequent school visits, speaking with students about ANG job opportunities. Last week, Capt. Bryce Fisher, 131st FW Public Affairs officer and St. Louis Rams football player, accompanied them.

“It’s important for kids to understand that the choices they make now impact their future,” said Capt. Fisher. “When I speak with them, it opens their eyes to the fact that you can be in the military and have a successful civilian career as well.”

Airman goes to Russia to study abroad

By Staff Sgt. Cathy Lirette
131st Fighter Wing Public Affairs

Not even a year after Senior Airman Christopher Haslett joined the Missouri Air National Guard did he find himself packing his bags to go overseas. However, it wasn't for the military.

Haslett, who works as a controller in the 131st Fighter Wing Command Post, was one of 23 Americans from all over the United States who were chosen for the Study Abroad program offered through Western Illinois University. He applied for the program through the American Institute of Foreign Studies as a way to study Political Science and Russian History.

Haslett joined the Guard in November of 2002 after serving four years on active duty. He spent 10 months here at Lambert before heading off to St. Petersburg, Russia. But before he could go, he had to tackle a few obstacles - the biggest being money.

According to Haslett, he had to come up with \$8,000 for the overall cost of the trip. He obtained the money by applying for Financial Aid and through an Illinois Veterans Grant.

Nonetheless, Haslett managed to clear his hurdles and boarded a plane Aug. 27. He travelled to London to meet the other participants in the program. From there, they took another flight to St. Petersburg.

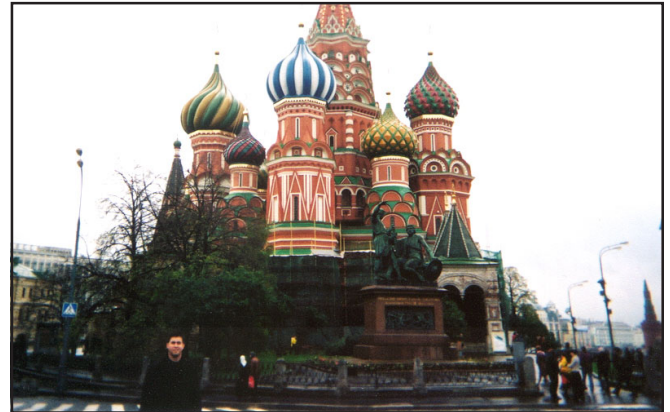
"It was very big city," said Haslett. "Approximately, 5 million people live there. It is close to Europe and there were many tourists. It was very cosmopolitan and there was lots to do."

Yet Haslett's trip was not all fun and games. He spent five days a week in the classroom studying Russian History, Russian Political Science and Language. In addition, he spent four hours a day learning the native language.

"Learning Russian was one of the biggest challenges for me," he said. "When I first got there I couldn't talk to anyone other than those in my class. But towards the end I could have a basic conversation with other people."

When he wasn't in the classroom he spent much of his time doing homework. Despite his full class load, Haslett was still able to take in many of the sites.

"I got to see the Hermitage, which is one of the biggest museums in the world," he



Courtesy photo

Senior Airman Christopher Haslett, 131st Fighter Wing Command Post controller, poses in front of the St. Basil Cathedral located in Moscow. Haslett was one of 23 American who went to Russia for the Study Abroad program.

said. "It was built for the Russia Czars as a Winter Palace. I also saw the Kremlin, which is a self-contained city with a multitude of palaces, armories and churches. It's a medieval fortress that links the modern nation to its legendary past."

He continued that he also got a chance to go out of the city to see the more rural areas. "The houses were very run down and many of the people were very poor."

Haslett added that during his stay he received a new found respect for the people and their history because of

everything they went through.

"Most people don't have a lot, but it is not a crutch to them," he said. "Although many of them live on only \$30 (American) per month, they still manage to make things work and do not complain about it. They are very proud!"

But Haslett stated that the best part about living overseas in Russia was observing their history.

He said that living overseas was a trilling experience and plans to try to go back to that general area during the summer. Who knows, the next time he might go as a part of the Air National Guard.

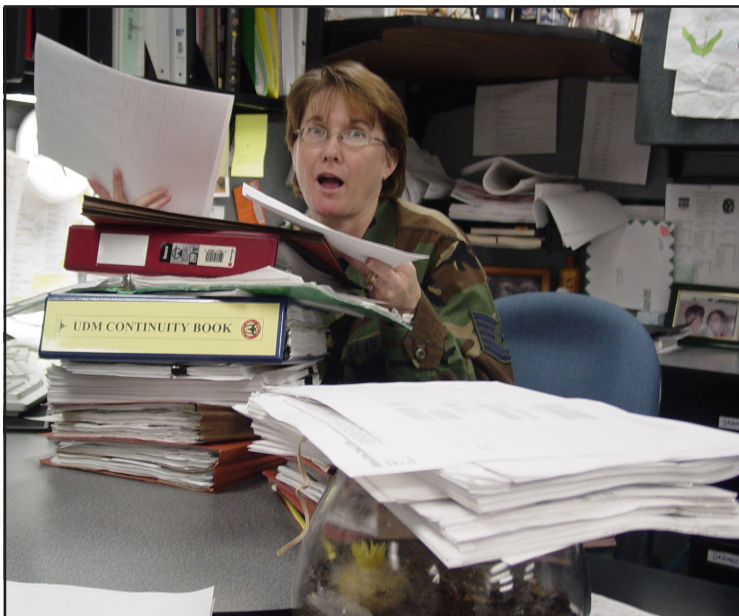


Photo by Staff Sgt. Cathy Lirette

In the Spotlight

As Unit Deployment Manager, Tech. Sgt. Jana Grass has a mountain of paper work to do in addition to her duties as an accounting technician in the 131st Fighter Wing Travel Section. When she is not hard at work, she likes to relax in front of the TV. She is a self proclaimed "reality TV freak." Grass also enjoys scapbooking and reading.

Wing's fitness levels compare with AF's "ideal"

By 2nd Lt. Bridget Zorn
131st Fighter Wing

How did the 131st Fighter Wing rate in its first year of the new revolutionary Fitnessage program? After much anticipation, the 2003 fitness assessment results are in, illustrating 131st FW fitness levels compared with the Air Force's "ideal."

Collectively, local units did not fare as well in body and cardio age categories as they did in the other categories tested. With an average age of 36, the cardio age was determined to be 41, which is considered average at best. With a body age of 48, the Wing failed to meet standards in the body age category.

On Feb. 2, Lt. Gen. Daniel James III, Director of the Air National Guard, released a memorandum announcing a revision to the "Fitnessage" program. The changes, which seek to fulfill the goals of Total Force leadership for "excellence in physical fitness and the

development of a fit force," will be incorporated into a new ANG Instruction.

ANGI 10-248, which will be released soon, will outline the ANG Fitness Program, known as Fitnessage. According to Gen James, "Fitnessage successfully helps each of us compare our level of fitness to the fitness of our age and gender-matched contemporaries"

The new program replaces both the ANG Fitness Program and Weight Body Fat Management Program and reintroduces the 1.5 mile run for the members who qualify. It also establishes a point scale for each graded area. These scales can be found at: <https://>

www.angfitness.com/Setup/new_program_announce.html. In order to pass the fitness assessment, members must score

75 of a possible 100 points in a combination of aerobic fitness, muscle fitness and body composition.

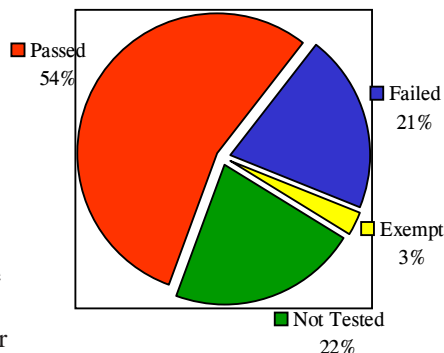
The 131st FW hopes to begin fitness testing in accordance with the new instruction as early as June.

Gen. James writes, "All of us have very full schedules and find free time a scarce commodity."

He challenges, "leadership at all levels to set the example and develop programs to ensure our personnel maintain the appropriate physical readiness."

Gen James reminds Air Force members that "to be ready, reliable and relevant, our personnel must be fit and healthy."

131 FW 2003 Results



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Military.com

Relay For Life

Looking for Volunteers to help with the Relay for Life event taking place on May 21, 2004. The event starts at 7pm and runs through 7am the next morning.

The event will be held at the Mueller Soccer Complex located at Hwy. 370 and Elm Rd. in St. Charles.

We would like volunteers to stay the entire night, but understand that is not always possible. This is a family event that offers entertainment, games, food and just a great atmosphere that also benefits the American Cancer Society.

There are also many ways you can help prior to the event to make this a success. Those that participated last year had a blast!

If interested in volunteering or for more information, contact Chief Jim Indelicato at 314-527-6309; Senior Master Sgt Dan Peters at 314-527-6292 or Tech. Sgt. Michael Schwer at 314-527-6299.